

SPAIN'S ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF ALLIED SECURITY IN NATO
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STUDENT ESSAY

SPAIN'S ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF ALLIED SECURITY IN NATO

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JUAN S. ELETA, IF, SPAIN

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This essay, however, concludes that Spain's eventual full integration can be a major milestone in the evolution of European military cooperation and political integration.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

SPAIN'S ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF ALLIED SECURITY IN NATO

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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ABSTRACT

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The advantages and disadvantages of the Spanish decision to remain and participate in NATO as the sixteenth nation are also discussed. The assumption is made that, sooner or later, Spain will be fully integrated in NATO's military structure. Nevertheless, this integration will take time and it cannot be expected to proceed smoothly, but rather, will involve complicated negotiations.

This essay, however, concludes that Spain's eventual full integration can be a major milestone in the evolution of European military cooperation and political integration.

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SPAIN'S ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF ALLIED SECURITY IN NATO

1.- Spain's potential contribution. Geopolitical aspects.

Spain is the second largest nation in Western Europe and the third largest in NATO. She has an area of nearly 200,000 square miles, slightly smaller than France and about two-thirds the size of Turkey. Its population of over 38 million ranks sixth in NATO. Although accession to the alliance does not significantly alter the East-West military balance, Spanish entry into NATO provides a range of possibilities to improve the military posture of the West.

Until the twentieth century, the strategic location of the Iberian peninsula has had a major influence on the course of Western civilization. Historically, Spain has been politically oriented toward the Atlantic and the Americas at least as much as it has been toward the Mediterranean and Europe, and Spain has maintained close ties with Africa and the Middle East. Although Spain was not directly involved in either of the world wars, the interest of Hitler in gaining Spain as an ally, and the efforts by Roosevelt to assure Spanish neutrality underline the continuing significance of Spain in the era of modern war-

fare. In the context of the international scene of the 1980's, the geographic position of Spain remains pivotal. The Iberian peninsula provides NATO forces with the needed depth for any conflict in Europe (as well as for potential wars outside the NATO area, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia). As the United States recognized early in the development of post-World War II political and military policy, Spain offers tremendous opportunities, not only for the positioning of reinforcements and equipment, but also staging movements of personnel and materiel into the battle area.

Spain's inclusion in the alliance will increase the security of the lines of communication between America and Europe and will improve the integrity of the NATO air defense system.

Spain also provides relatively safe territory for airfields and headquarters which will complement existing facilities elsewhere in NATO. Essentially, Spain is perceived as a platform from which allies can prepare for launch, and sustain strategic operations against the Warsaw Pact forces even if forward defense were to fail.

Spain's peninsular location, magnified by the Canary Islands astride the vital oil tanker routes between the Indian Ocean and Europe, is of overriding maritime significance. Its commanding position flanking the Strait of Gibraltar will be crucial in any conceivable East-West war scenario. Spain's thousand-mile Mediterranean coastline, projected eastward 200 miles by the Balearic Islands, greatly enhances the ability of NATO to maintain control of the western Mediterranean basin and allows the Commander

in Chief, Allied forces Southern Region (CINCSOUTH), to concentrate naval assets in the more vulnerable central and eastern areas. Additionally, the oceanic coasts of Spain offer improved control over the Bay of Biscay and access routes to both the English Channel and transatlantic shipping lanes.

The political implications of Spain's membership are directly related to its geographical location. Warsaw Pact perceptions and calculations are undoubtedly affected by an alliance that is nearly 20 percent larger in area (excluding North America and Iceland) and which represents a more completely united Western Europe. Furthermore, Spain provides a bridge to the African and South American continents and enhances existing ties between NATO and the Middle East. These political links clearly increase NATO's ability to deter war.

POPULATION.- Spain's population accounts for over 10 percent of the European NATO total, and its gross domestic product, at over 7 percent of the European NATO total, suggests that the increase Spain offers to the military power of NATO is marginal. Despite its large population, Spain has fewer people per square mile than any other European NATO country except Turkey and Norway. Spanish society lacks homogeneity, and descriptions often refer to "two Spains", one traditionalist and sometimes reactionary, and the other liberal and sometimes radical. In reality, Spain's population is much more complex than this two dimensional image suggests.

One of the most striking features of recent history has been the struggle for autonomy within some of its 50 provinces. Regional

loyalties and public dissatisfaction with the government's failure to stem Basque terrorism tend to create an atmosphere of instability which continues to threaten the viability of Spain as a democratic nation.

During the last two decades, the demographic pattern of Spain reflected significant changes in the nation societal structure. As the country industrialized, tens of thousands of people migrated to the cities. Today one fourth of the Spanish labor force works on farms, while nearly half is employed in urban industries. This evolution caused many economic and social strains which nurtured the rapid growth of the Spanish Socialist Party. At the same time, urbanization tended to blur some of the traditional divisions within the country and contributed to a literacy rate which has climbed to 97 percent. But Spain's many years of relatively isolation have resulted in a low level of Spanish public knowledge of, or interest in, European politics.

2. - THE ECONOMIC ASPECT. - A gross domestic product of \$192 billions ranks Spain seventh in the alliance, but the GDP per capita drops Spain to 12th, higher than only Greece, Portugal and Turkey. Spain's real growth averaged 7 percent from 1965 to 1974, but hovered at about 2 percent in subsequent years, reflecting the worldwide economic slowdown. Spain has been plagued by double digit inflation for most of the last decade, and its balance of payments deficit reached \$13.4 billion in 1980. This deficit, has been caused primarily by the increase in the cost of imported oil. Despite current economic problems, Spain has resources and industrial potential which could be valuable to NATO. Principal

Spanish exports to the United States, for instance, include such militarily useful products as rubber tires, motor vehicles parts, footwear, and iron and steel sheets. Although Spain is a net importer of foodstuffs, the largest volume of worldwide Spanish exports is in the agricultural field, and such items as citrus fruits and fresh vegetables could contribute to the sustenance of allied combat forces. Spain has a growing weapons industrial base and is currently producing its own mechanized Infantry Fighting Vehicle, the BMR-600, which is reportedly as good as any equivalent vehicle in NATO. Spain is also producing the French AMX-30 tank under license. Spanish shipbuilding and repair facilities are among the best in Europe, and Spain has for several years provided depot level maintenance for both US and Spanish aircraft. Spain's rather intensive automotive industry also has considerable military potential.

For many years, Spain looked toward membership in the European Economic Community (EEC or the Common Market) as a key to sustaining Spanish economic growth. This membership was initially blocked by post World War II resentments and anti Franco sentiments in Europe. But once Franco died, Spain was invited to embark on a new stage of political cooperation with the Common market and recently (1st Jan 1986) Spain can be considered as a member of the EEC.

3.- THE MILITARY FACTOR. Spain, although officially neutral during the two world wars, has a history tightly bound with the military. While its peninsular isolation permits a degree of natural protection not enjoyed by other European countries, Spain

continuously devotes almost a quarter of the central government budget to defense. The Spanish armed forces, in manning and spending levels, rank sixth and seventh, respectively, in relation to other countries. About 0.9 percent of its population is under arms. This is slightly above the NATO wide average. Compared to the 3.8 percent average of other European NATO countries. Spain's defense budget represents about 1.9 percent of its GDP., half the European average.

Spain has a system of conscripted service for men at age of 18, with a period of 12-15 months of service followed by reserve status until age of 38. Over a third of a million Spanish men are on active duty, and approximately 1.5 million are in the reserves. Almost three fourths of the military force is in the Spanish Army. The Army consists of five divisions and various smaller size units. Designed, mainly, to provide territorial protection, the Army has virtually no capability to project its forces into Central Europe. By NATO standards, the Spanish Army is not well equipped, and its fleet of some 900 tanks consists primarily of American M-47's and M-48's and includes 200 AMX-30's. Most of the Army equipment is US or French manufactured and is generally interoperable with that of other NATO nations.

The Spanish Navy, which is charged with the protection of Spanish coasts and islands, has 40 principal combatant ships. The 54,000 man Navy includes 11,000 marines and a large number of amphibious warfare landing vessels as well as a wide variety of mine sweeping and laying, anti-submarine, coastal patrol, and support craft. Additionally, the Spanish merchant fleet, consisting of nearly

500 registered ships, is the fifth largest in Western Europe. Collectively these maritime forces have a capability which could positively influence a maritime conflict in both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean areas.

The Spanish Air Force of about 40,000 men has some 200 combat aircrafts organized into 11 fighter-bomber squadrons. The inventory includes F-4C's, F-5's, Mirage III-EE's, and a few Mirage F-1's. Spain is planning to modernize its Air Force with the purchase of over a hundred new fighter (mainly F-18's). The Air Force is designed to provide air defense and tactical air support for ground and naval forces, but it has little capability to conduct long range operations or to airlift cargo and personnel.

Although Spain has been generally isolated from NATO, various military links with allied members exist. During the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War, Mussolini dispatched more than 50,000 Italian soldiers as well as air and naval units to assist Franco's Nationalist Forces. The infamous German Condor Legion of bombers also supported Franco, while more than 2,000 US volunteers joined the International Brigade of the losing Republican Army. A feeling of long standing affiliation between Spain and Germany persists, and few veterans of the volunteer "Blue Division", which fought with the "Wehrmacht" on the Russian front from 1941 to 1943, are still on active duty.

The Iberian Pact of 1942, which linked Spain and Portugal, has evolved into a mutual defense treaty, and Spanish Army units periodically conduct exercises with the Portuguese. The proximity of Spain to France has led to limited military cooperation, as

well as to the infusion of some French equipment into Spain's Army, Navy, and Air Force.

By far, the most significant foreign influence on Spain has come from the United States in the form of arm sales, military training and military aid. The 1953 US-Spain Pact of Friendship and Cooperation constituted a formal alliance short of a mutual defense agreement. Most military hardware in all three services is of US origin, and many of Spanish officers and noncommissioned officers have trained at US military schools. In return, the Spanish have allowed the United States to construct and use four major bases, and nearly 9,000 American troops, mostly airmen, are stationed in Spain.

Until the present position of Spain in NATO few contracts with the alliance have existed. Spanish naval elements have occasionally participated in NATO exercises, and NATO authorities have invited Spanish observers to different maneuvers.

4.-NATO BENEFITS ABOUT SPAIN'S MEMBERSHIP.-To demonstrate the solidarity and health of the alliance: As the alliance enters its fourth decade, NATO wants to demonstrate to friend and foe alike that it is still a viable coalition and an organization which continues to embody the collective determination of free democratic nations to resist aggression. Spanish membership provides a sign that NATO has not outlived its usefulness but continues to be a relevant force in the international scene of the 1980's. Furthermore, in light of earlier opposition of member nations to Franco's Spain, Spanish accession represents an important achievement for the fundamental democratic principles of the alliance.

improved maritime control: The growing Soviet naval presence in both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean poses a threat requiring the buildup of allied naval resources and merchant shipping. The range of Spanish maritime capabilities includes naval and merchant fleets, ports, ship repair facilities, and geographic sealane control points. Additionally, use of Spanish airfields for sea surveillance missions can enhance NATO maritime control capabilities. Such improvements to NATO's naval capabilities are of possible value to the Supreme Allied Commanders of both Europe and the Atlantic, as well as the Commander in Chief of the English Channel.

Enhanced air defenses: NATO is not well protected from a possible air attack from the south. Regional instability in northern Africa could lead to exposure of NATO facilities in Iberia as well as the vital Atlantic and Mediterranean shipping lanes. Spanish air defenses can help to protect NATO's southern and southwestern flanks.

Improved capabilities to reinforce the Southern Region: The southern flank of NATO is vulnerable to Warsaw Pact attacks through the Middle East and the Mediterranean as well as from adjacent communist nations. In addition to Spanish forces, which could be included in reinforcement plans, the Iberian peninsula provides potential staging areas and access routes for reinforcing forces from America and other allied nations.

Improved Spanish defense programs: Through the Defense Planning Questionnaire process, NATO authorities annually review each member's force structure and contribution to the alliance.

NATO could undoubtedly request major improvements in Spanish

To enhance deterrence through a more credible combat posture.

Spanish membership in NATO affects this aspect as follows:

Defense in depth. The 1965 withdrawal of France from the integrated military structure seriously weakened the combat posture of the alliance. NATO needs air, land, and sea bases to the rear of the battle area for both peacetime and wartime positioning of forces. Rear area supply and maintenance depots are also critically required, as are sites for headquarters and communications facilities well behind the combat zone. Additionally, allied commanders need strategic depth in order to develop and execute the maneuver and counterattack plans, essential to implement the doctrine of forward defense.

Deployment of nuclear weapons. The vast expanse of the Iberian Peninsula presents the possibility of stationing theater nuclear weapons in Spain, although range limitations suggest that this is not presently a realistic option. Spain also has vast potential for the storage of ground, sea and air deliverable tactical nuclear weapons.

Implementation of the long term defense program (LTDP). NATO'S 1978 blueprint for achieving force goals highlights the most critical areas of deficiency in the alliance. Progress has been particularly slow in ammunition and fuel stockage, mining and mine countermeasures, and the provision of additional reserve brigades. With the Spanish maritime capabilities in mine warfare and the large numbers of Spaniards on reserve status, Spain has the potential to contribute in each of these areas and to the construction of NATO storage facilities.

military equipment, training, and organization. Additionally NATO wide policy to increase national defense budget by 3 percent each year would also apply to Spain.

To maintain current NATO boundaries: It is clear that no consensus exists to expand NATO's geographic area in any direction, and Warsaw Pact nations will probably argue that any attempt to enlarge NATO will violate the spirit of the 1975 Helsinki accords. Both the Canaries and the Balarics, as well as the Chafarinas and Alboran islands off the coast of Morocco, fall within the area of NATO as defined by the Charter. Inclusion of Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the coast of Africa, however, would require a unanimous amendment of the Charter, a process which would be highly unlikely to succeed.

To respect sensitivities of all member nations: During the various debates on Spanish membership which took place in national parliaments, several bilateral issues between Spain and other members surfaced. Given the veto power of each member, it would be difficult to incorporate Spain into the alliance in such a way that any member's position on a bilateral issue would be compromised. These issues include the following:

Status of Gibraltar: Since the British Navy conquered the two-plus square mile territory of Gibraltar in 1704, the status of that British colony has been a continuing irritant to UK-Spain relationships. Over 99 percent of the 28,000 residents want to maintain their British citizenship, and the UK response to the Argentinian invasion of the Falklands suggests that Great Britain will not easily yield to the Spanish claims of sovereignty.

over Gibraltar.

Portuguese command of the Iberian Atlantic Command (IBERLANT): NATO recently decided to transfer command of IBERLANT from a US to a Portuguese Vice Admiral. This command position recognizes the political and military contribution of Portuguese naval forces to the alliance, and it also reflects that the Portuguese have a sizable sphere of influence in the Atlantic, including the Azores. Early in the discussions concerning Spanish entry, the question of Spanish interests in the Atlantic, particularly along the African coast to the Canary Islands, gave rise to a suggestion that Spain should alternate command of IBERLANT with Portugal. The Portuguese defense Minister categorically rejected such an arrangement, and the Foreign Minister repeatedly insisted in no alteration in command zones affecting Portugal by threatening to veto any change to the existing IBERLANT command structure.

French maritime interests: Although France is not in the NATO integrated military structure, the french sphere of influence includes its coastal waters in the western Mediterranean Sea and the Bay of Biscay. The latter area is essential to the protection of the English Channel. Command of the Biscay Area (BISCLANT) is now exercised by the Commander in Chief Eastern Atlantic (a major subordinate commander of SACLANT). NATO authorities should carefully integrate the Spanish naval forces into the military structure so as not to complicate the incorporation of the French maritime command in time of war.

Greek concerns : Greece is concerned that Spanish integration will require a redefinition of the command and control arrange-

ments in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, both Greece and Turkey probably fear that NATO acceptance of a Spanish role in French coastal waters could set a precedent that might undermine their respective claims in the Aegean Sea.

To encourage the development of members' democratic institutions : The NATO Charter expresses the members' determination to safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. Parliamentary debates on Spanish membership reflected a persistent concern that Spain is vulnerable to a military putsch, and these sentiments may influence the political decisions concerning the Spanish role in NATO. The February 1981 attempted coup in Madrid caused more than a ripple of such concern.

To limit costs to the alliance : The NATO budget includes varying amounts of infrastructure funds for the construction of fixed installations required for the deployment and operation of NATO forces, for example, airfields, communications and radar sites, headquarters, fuel storage facilities, and port installations. Obviously, the addition of Spain and its islands to the alliance will contribute to share the cost of these requirements.

To develop the capability to combat terrorism : International terrorism has become a growing problem in recent years, as evidenced by attacks on NATO officials and installations, particularly in Germany. The long bitter Spanish experience with basque terrorism has developed a cadre of military personnel capable of providing advice and assistance to NATO headquarters

which is responsible for addressing the terrorist threats to personnel and facilities.

5.- SPAIN BENEFITS AS A MEMBER OF NATO.-Spain's attitudes and motivations involved in its accession to the alliance, generally fall into five categories: political, territorial, economic, internal, and defense. Let us consider some of them.

Political reasons : To regain influence in Europe. After a long period of isolation from, and in many cases, condemnation by, modern Europe, Spain yearns to regain its rightful place on the continent. A consistent theme in all Spanish discussions concerning NATO membership, has been its desire for acceptance as an important European power and recognition as a modern democratic state. Spain clearly wants and needs the political influence and prestige which it perceives accompanies NATO membership.

To become more independent of the United States : Although government to government relations are generally warm, the perception of Spanish vulnerability to a US-Soviet confrontation helps explain the anti American sentiments prevailing the demonstrations against NATO entry which swept Spain in the last months.

To promote interests outside of NATO : Spain has developed an independent foreign policy approach, particularly towards the Arab countries and Latin America. For many years, Spain perceived itself as the bridge between Europe and those regions, and its relationships have evolved from cultural and historical ties which have not been unduly shaded by Europe and America's preoccupation with the Soviet threat. The Spanish perception of this non-NATO orientation is fundamental to its view of its role in the world.

Territorial objectives : To regain sovereignty over Gibraltar.

In Spain, few political issues evoke more emotion than the question of Gibraltar. The centuries-old dispute with Britain on the status of this strategically important area, frequently emerged during the Spanish debate on NATO entry. The Cortes (Spanish Parliament), in a resolution addressing Spain's entry to NATO, stated "that the recovery of Spanish sovereignty over Gibraltar is essential"; thus the government agreed not to insist on an acceptable solution prior to entry.

To guarantee protection of the African enclaves : Spain governs Ceuta and Melilla as parts of Cadiz and Almeria provinces and considers these enclaves on the African coast to be integral parts of the country. Spanish sentiments on this question are probably more intense than were French attitudes toward Algeria prior to its independence, and Spain is well aware of the inclusion of Algeria under the original NATO Charter. The Cortes instructed the government on the "need to guarantee the security of the entire national territories, both, inside and outside the peninsula". It is clear that the extrapeninsular territories in question are the enclaves and islands off Morocco north coast.

Spain has not publicly pressed for an extension of the NATO boundaries. Ex-Defense Minister Oliart specifically stated what command authority Spain wanted within NATO: "Exclusive Spanish command over all its territory and adjacent waters, control over the bay of Biscay, the Balearic area, the Strait of Gibraltar and, of course, the Canary Islands". Similarly, in the Cortes debate, former Defense Minister Oliart stated again that Spain would

demand command "of the region of the Straight, with flanking support in the Balearics and Canaries areas. The Cantabrian area and that of the northwest of the peninsula must also be under Spanish command". Spain is, however, sensitive to Portuguese concerns and has indicated that it does not intend for a dispute over IBERIAN command relationships to cause any problem over NATO membership. Economic objectives : To facilitate the full integration into the European Economic Community (EEC). The 1981 Cortes resolution, which authorized the Spanish government to apply for NATO membership, started with a declaration of "the desirability of Spain becoming integrated into the political, economic and defense structure of the Western World".

Full Common Market membership, essential for Spain's economic growth, will be considerably less difficult once Spanish military programs become integrated with those of NATO nations, most of which are EEC members.

To strengthen Spain's economy : Spaniards perceive that NATO membership itself will bring economic benefits mainly in the defense field: weapons production cooperation, licenses for the construction of military equipment, technological and military-industrial cooperation and bigger share of the profits from arm sales. Internal objectives : To stabilize Spanish democracy. The threat of a military putsch presents probably the greatest single threat to the emerging Spanish democracy. The abortive coup of February 1981, followed by a series of incidents, strongly suggests that the Spanish political leaders have not been entirely successful in depoliticizing the military. As Time magazine's European

editor John Nielsen observed, probably following the thought of several Spanish authorities, "Spaniards believe the best way to keep the armed forces out of politics would be to bring Spain into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization."

To enhance Spain's defensive posture : Security interests were not paramount in Spain's decision to join the alliance. Prime Minister Felipe González, probably echoed popular sentiment when, at the time he was just Socialist Party leader, he expressed his opposition to NATO: "It would not improve Spain's military security in any way... The strategic interests of Spain, which faces North Africa, do not coincide with those of NATO and may conflict with them." Although Spanish objectives appear to be virtually unrelated to the defensive purposes of the alliance, joining NATO will help Spain to achieve other, no less important, political goals.

6.- POLITICAL IMPACT OF SPAIN'S MEMBERSHIP. The degree to which Spanish membership will affect the alliance is impossible to quantify. Although its forces and weapons can be tallied along with those of the rest of NATO, Spanish military assets are not massive enough to create any appreciable shift in the East-West balance. In a realistic sense, virtually no change occurs, because Spain has actually been in the western camp almost since the creation of NATO.

As a member of the alliance, Spain will be able to influence the way NATO deals with the rest of the world. Spain, as a bridge to Arab countries and Latin America, can complement the efforts to address the non-NATO problems, and the Spanish contribution can

be useful in the dialogue between the alliance and the external world. Another immediate result may be the emergence of a fundamental question concerning NATO strategy: now that NATO has theoretically increased its capability to maneuver to the rear and to use the Spanish terrain to mount a decisive counterattack, is a strict forward defense policy still appropriate ?

The entrance of Spain may not be great in terms of actual war-fighting capability, but the country's presence may open the door to some new strategic thinking about a different NATO doctrine. In quantifiable terms, Spain provides very few immediate gains to the war-fighting capability of NATO, but in geopolitical terms, the addition of Spain is unquestionably a gain to NATO.

Spain enters after a particularly troubled period, and now, NATO appears to be a little more robust, partly because growth suggests health. The alliance now also reflects a more united Europe, and the strategic depth afforded by Spain improves the deterrent posture of NATO.

Finally, that is not to say that the process of Spain's full integration will not be smooth or easy. Spain's full assimilation will create political and economic problems for itself, for its neighbors, for the United States, and for NATO. The eventual result could be, however, a major milestone in the evolution of European military cooperation and political integration.

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